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ABSTRACT

This publication contains three articles that examine the changing role of the urban superintendent. The first presents highlights of interviews with Dr. Walter Amprey, superintendent of the Baltimore City Public Schools, and Dr. Donald Ingwerson, who served 12 years as the superintendent of the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools. Each superintendent related his experiences with collaborative projects and emphasized the importance of collaboration in educational reform. The second article describes a National Science Foundation grant program for the betterment of urban schools--the Urban Systemic Initiative (USI). The USI is aimed at a limited number of large cities to initiate systemic reform to foster experimentation, accelerate the rate of change, and implement systemwide improvement in K-12 students' achievement in mathematics, science, and technology. The third article summarizes comments made at the January, 1993, meeting of the Urban Superintendents' Network by the mayors of five cities--Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tacoma, Washington, and Washington, D.C. The final section includes a review of the book "Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services." A list of OERI Superintendents' Network members is included. (LMI)

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THE URBAN SUPERINTENDENTS'

SOUNDING BOARD

Vol 2, No 1 REPORTING ON MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS Winter 1994

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Involving Cities in Our Schools

Municipal Collaboration in Urban Districts

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OERI Urban Superintendents' Network Meeting December 9-10, 1993

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Dr. Walter Amprey and Dr. Donald Ingwerson may differ in the length of time they have served as big-city school superintendents, but they are alike in their outspokenness about the changes taking place in education and the role collaboration plays in that change. Dr. Amprey has been superintendent of the Baltimore City Public Schools for a little more than two years. Dr. Ingwerson, until he left the superintendency last July to become president of the Galef Institute in Los Angeles, had served for twelve years as the superintendent of the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools, which includes the schools in the Louisville area.

At last January's OERI Urban Superintendents' Network meeting in Washington, D.C., both men spoke at length about their experiences as educational leaders in their respective cities and about the way superintendent leadership roles are changing. The conditions in urban school settings demand new styles of leadership, they explained, and equally new and creative ways of forming collaborative arrangements with all segments of the educational and civic community.

Trying New Things in Baltimore

"There is no question in my mind that we're out of time and we're out of tricks," Dr. Amprey says of the current state of affairs in education. He believes that a completely new culture of education must be created before educational reform can succeed. "We've got to rethink how we see education," he says. "As someone said a long time ago, 'When something is going wrong—when things aren't going well—the question to ask is not what we need to do, but what we need to understand.' And once we understand, what to do falls naturally into place. So the whole concept of reform, I think, has to carry with it an accelerated, determined, powerful effort to change the culture."

"The whole concept of reform has to carry with it an accelerated, determined, powerful effort to change the culture."

—Dr. Walter Amprey

"And that's what we started trying to do in Baltimore. We started with a philosophical vision that doesn't say, 'All kids *can* learn.' It says, 'All kids *do* learn.' And that's an important difference, because it changes the responsibility."

Kids who drop out of school *are* learning, Dr. Amprey points out, but unfortunately they learn things that are antisocial and self-destructive. "People display their brilliance, and they're going to display it in some way or another," he explains. " So our job is to create the kind of climate that allows that natural intelligence to be positive

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and rewarding and fulfilling. That's very important."

To test this philosophy, Dr. Amprey has recently helped institute a pilot program of educational reform in Baltimore by designating eight elementary schools and one middle school in the city as Tesseract schools, a private/public educational partnership program run by Minnesota Educational Alternatives, Inc.

Dr. Amprey's interest in testing this program in the Baltimore schools sprang from a site-visit he made to Paradise Valley, Arizona, where he saw first-hand how the individual instructional programs, low student/teacher ratios, and extensive use of technology in Tesseract classrooms worked. Convinced that something similar was needed in Baltimore, he and his colleagues identified eight elementary schools and one middle school that would benefit from participation in the program. Then they began the process of working through the bureaucratic, financial, and political issues and conflicts inherent in any attempt to institute change.

The schools are now up and running, evaluative instruments have been developed, and the program has generated growing interest throughout the district. "We've done well, we think," Dr. Amprey says. "We were attracted to the opportunity to take at least 5,000 of our youngsters and see if we could put this to work with what we think is the ideal educational environment. We are hearing talk already about the possibility of adding more schools, and we're also hearing of the replication of the model in other ways."

The Changing Superintendency

Dr. Amprey's time as the superintendent in Baltimore has given him a crash course on the style of leadership necessary to run schools in an urban setting, where community politics and control have fostered some healthy changes. "The role of the superintendent now," he says, "requires that we no longer develop the skill and hone the ability to be autonomous—to keep people off our backs, to keep education for the educators, and to keep others out of the way while mouthing collaboration. We have no choice now but to respond to the doors that are being knocked down by all of those who are saying, 'We want a part of this; we want to be a part of this; we're going to make some decisions about how education is done.' I think that superintendents now, wherever they are, have to develop the skills that help bring about consensus and that lead to effective communication. We must be truly involved and promote collaborative decision-making, while at the same time recognizing our fiduciary and boundary-setting responsibilities."

Collaborating in Louisville

Dr. Donald Ingwerson's twelve years of experience as an urban superintendent have given him a deep appreciation of the importance of community involvement in education. The Jefferson County, Kentucky, public schools developed a history of collaboration during the years of Dr. Ingwerson's tenure as superintendent. Almost 750 collaborative agreements have been established, and these partnerships have generated more than $40 million in educational funding.

"In Louisville, we started to get serious about collaboration in the mid-1980s," Dr. Ingwerson recounts. "When I first arrived in Louisville in 1981, the community was very fragmented and the trust level was very low. The only way to build a sense of community was to involve as many people as possible. As we did, simple agreements grew into partnerships. Then, about four or five years ago, more complex, results-oriented efforts called for true collaboration. In one of our first agency collaborative efforts, we worked for more than a year and then had to start all over because the first effort was not building true collaboration. In this particular case, we finally got all the agencies dealing with child abuse, the homeless, and so forth meeting together regularly. Agencies from the city and the county, the economic development groups, the Chamber of Commerce, the schools, the Metro United Way, the Private Industry Council, and the university are now meeting regularly on youth collaboration. They've met ... thirty-two times now. That's historic. That's collaboration—when all the stakeholders feel that they have been empowered and they see and feel that better services are resulting."

Out of such efforts have come several successful programs, most recently an effort to set up family and youth centers in every elementary school in the Louisville area.

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LENDING A HAND

The OERI Urban Superintendents' Network

On December 9 and 10 of this year, members of the Urban Superintendents' Network—a group of twenty-eight superintendents from the nation's largest urban school districts—will meet in Washington, D.C., to exchange information about the challenges they face, learn about a National Science Foundation grant program for the betterment of urban schools, and discuss the need for new belief systems that will support change efforts in urban districts.

Cosponsored by the National Science Foundation, the December meeting will feature a special session on the NSF's Urban Systemic Initiative (USI). The USI is aimed at a limited number of large cities to initiate systemic reform to foster experimentation, accelerate the rate of change, and implement systemwide improvement in student learning, grades K-12, in mathematics, science, and technology. Dr. Luther Williams, the NSF's Assistant Director for Education and Human Resources, will meet with Network members to discuss the USI program.

Several U.S. Department of Education leaders have also been invited to meet with the group, including Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education; Madeleine Kunin, Deputy Secretary; former Network member Thomas W. Payzant, now Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; and Sharon Robinson, Assistant Secretary, OERI.

Also on the meeting agenda is a keynote address by Dr. Jeffrey Howard, director of the Efficacy Institute, based in Lexington, Massachusetts. Dr. Howard will offer his insights into the kinds of core beliefs that must be instilled in students, parents, teachers, and administrators if urban education is to succeed in its mission of improving the lives of students who live in urban areas.

Collaborating to Educate Our Urban Young

Since its creation in the early 1980s the Urban Superintendents' Network, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, has sponsored meetings and carried out many other activities to help its superintendent members improve urban schools. Nearly every educational issue becomes politically charged in the urban setting, where the challenges of providing effective schooling are as varied as the students themselves.

Young people in urban areas are routinely expected to overcome the profound effects of the poverty, drugs, crime, violence, and other social ills that surround them. Their schools are often in a state of disrepair; their teachers frequently work in crowded classrooms with high numbers of students at risk of educational failure. With eroding tax bases and higher educational costs, securing adequate funding and stretching those funds to cover the costs of successfully educating urban students are obstacles big-city superintendents face year after year.

Despite these difficult conditions, many success stories have emerged from urban districts. Creative, effective superintendent leadership has helped to shape a wide array of programs that address the full spectrum of educational and social needs of students attending urban schools. Urban school superintendents long ago learned that establishing programs based in community collaboration is one of the most effective methods for improving their

students' educational achievement. Thus, they have become very skilled at creating working relationships with municipal agencies, social service providers, businesses, parent and community associations, and many other groups in their districts.

A Key Resource

Urban Superintendents' Network meetings provide urban school superintendents with a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and gather new information about the process of effective collaboration and other issues related to the urban superintendency. For example, at the Network meeting last January, the mayors of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tacoma, Washington; and Washington, D.C., reported on the municipal-school collaborations in their respective cities (see article on page 6). Deputy mayors and educational liaison officers from several other urban areas provided information on collaborative educational projects their city governments have developed.

Other recent Network meetings have brought superintendents together with social service agency representatives, business leaders, chamber of commerce executives, school board members, principals, and parents for intensive work sessions, panel and roundtable discussions, presentations, networking opportunities, and other activities related to partnerships in education (see the Winter 1993 issue of *The Urban Superintendents' Sounding Board*).

Other Issues

Although collaboration is a frequent theme at Network meetings, there are also many other presentations that provide the superintendents with current information on the wide range of topics that affect urban education. At most meetings, the Secretary of Education and other high-level officials meet with Network members to discuss current education policies and practices. Experts in such areas as Chapter I funding, educational standards and testing, demographics, and health and human services keep meeting participants informed about the latest developments in these fields as well.

Collegial Support

One of the most important benefits of the Network meetings is the collegiality and mutual support they foster among urban school superintendents. As educational leaders in our nation's cities, the women and men who take on the difficult job of running urban school systems quickly accrue valuable experience and wisdom about the political, fiscal, and managerial realities of operating large school districts. At the same time, they must maintain a clear vision of how to best educate young people in the complex environment of urban America. The Urban Superintendents' Network meetings give urban superintendents the opportunity to share their knowledge and visions with one another so that they can return to their districts with new plans and ideas for improving the educational performance of their students.

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Another successful collaborative project in Louisville led to the establishment of a professional development center. According to Dr. Ingwerson, the center is a "neutral place for parents, bus drivers, teachers, principals, and business leaders. It's open six days a week and in the evenings. It's a place where the unions and the administration and the community can come together to agree upon solutions to problems. It's separate from the mayor's office, it's separate from the board of education, it's separate from the superintendent's office. Now, that doesn't mean it's separate from our efforts and fragmented. It does say to the community: 'You are important—your work is important—and we not only care about you but we also care about where you meet and where you work'."

Commitment to Change

Dr. Ingwerson's experience with educational reform has taught him some useful lessons about changing the educational environment. "Those schools, those principals, those students, and those parents who deal in *systemic* reform really do improve," he says. "The students' test scores are up, their morale is up, the school conditions are better and changing. Out of 160 schools, we have those that are deeply involved in systemic reform, those that are dabbling in it, and those that don't want anything to do with it. ... But if you just dabble in systemic reform, your school may not do as well as it would if it remained more traditional. The important thing is, you have to believe in what you're doing. So if you believe in systemic reform, it will probably pay off with improved student behavior, competence, and achievement."

"If you just dabble in systemic reform, your school may not do as well as it would if it remained more traditional. The important thing is, you have to believe in what you're doing."

—Dr. Donald Ingwerson

The role of superintendents in the reform process, Dr. Ingwerson believes, is as leaders who "point the compass." "But if you're going to get to that place where the compass points, you need a road map, you need connectedness, " he says. "You need someone to develop a road map. And the people who need to develop the road maps are the people who are involved in the work—the teachers, the principals, the city agencies, the youth-serving agencies—those are the people who need to develop the road map. The compass needs to be set by the leaders. And then we start breaking the systemic reforms into bite-size pieces through collaboration. If we don't get buy-in on the part of the stakeholders, we will probably be diverting our energy away from helping children."

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REPORTS FROM THE MAYORS

Collaboration Across the Country

EVERY URBAN AREA has its own specific needs when it comes to collaboration. Health is a key issue in some cities, community relations in others, gang-related problems in others. At the Urban Superintendents' Network meeting last January, the mayors of five cities—Albuquerque, Denver, Minneapolis, Tacoma, and Washington, D.C.—reported on the ways their cities have collaborated with area agencies to address particular needs in their municipalities.

Louis Saavedra, Albuquerque

Education is on the front burner in Albuquerque. At a recent town meeting held in the city's convention center, thousands of people showed up, and "all they wanted to talk about was education," Mayor Louis Saavedra says. One area the city has been focusing on recently is improving school-community relations in some of its neighborhoods. The fact that there are more than 200 officially recognized neighborhood associations in Albuquerque offered the city a perfect chance to create programs that would help foster closer ties between schools and nearby residents.

The program the city organized for elementary schools is built around challenge grants that focus on beautification projects involving cooperation between community groups and individual schools. At the middle school level, the grants are directed toward adopt-a-school programs designed to combat gang activity, vandalism, and dropout problems.

Wellington Webb, Denver

"When we look at some of the problems we are facing in Denver," says Mayor Wellington Webb, "it has become obvious that in order to address those issues, there has to be a coordinated effort to link what goes on within the mayor's office, the city council, and the school board."

One of Denver's recent collaborative efforts has been in the area of health. "It's our belief that in order for kids to learn, they also have to be healthy," Mayor Webb says. In cooperation with public and private hospitals and other health care agencies in the Denver area, the city has begun a pilot program to establish a health clinic in each school in one of Denver's disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Mayor Webb notes that in addition to providing urgently needed health care to young people and community members, another goal of the program is "to demonstrate statistically that providing health care in needed areas reflects in the learning among the children in those schools."

Webb says he thinks that young people and their education are directly linked to almost every issue urban leaders face: "The bottom line for all of us concerned with governing cities, when we look to the quality of the work force, when we look to issues that affect the cities in general, is that they all revolve back around young people as a resource."

Donald Fraser, Minneapolis

In a city like Minneapolis, where elected boards oversee many of the city's functions and services, it can be a major challenge to establish collaborative ventures. But Mayor Donald Fraser's administration has succeeded in setting up a number of partnerships involving schools and public and private agencies. Several years ago, Minneapolis established a Youth Coordinating Board that has representatives from all elected boards, as well as members of the city's delegation to the state legislature. Another partnership with the United Way has resulted in a program called Success by Six, which, according to Mayor Fraser, is "a kind of conceptual umbrella for the argument that you need to pay attention to how our kids are doing in the first five years of their lives before they come to school."

The school system and other parts of the community have also developed a Home Visitor Program that attempts to provide a connecting resource between families, particularly

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where young pregnant women are involved. The program provides timely prenatal services and connects young mothers-to-be with someone who is "a friend and advocate for that family."

Family support is also one of the goals of the city's Neighborhood Early Learning Centers, which provide a working space for family-support activities and neighborhood-based kindergarten/preschool programs, including Head Start. Just last year, Mayor Fraser reports, the city began working with the schools to establish an afterschool program that will provide structured activities for kids with working parents.

The city's approach to collaboration focuses on family and neighborhood support systems. "What we're trying to do," Mayor Fraser explains, "is rebuild community in the neighborhoods—to build connectiveness, relationships, and support systems that work for all families, that work for all children. And it's our judgment that unless we do that, the social service response will be inadequate and too late."

Mayor Fraser likens much of our present-day social service system to a repair shop: "You're looking at a production line, and at the end of the production line you have some defective products and you send them off to the repair shop. And it seems to me that over the years, we've invested more and more in the repair shops. It's time to go back to the production line and find out why things aren't working from the very beginning."

Karen Vialle, Tacoma

Tacoma has had a long tradition of collaboration between the city and the school district, according to Mayor Karen Vialle. When she took office in 1989, she was determined to continue the tradition. She made it clear during her campaign that "the mayor's office was going to be very aggressive in education, because we don't have good cities unless we have good schools." And thanks in part to a wide-ranging program of collaborative partnerships, present-day Tacoma has good schools, Mayor Vialle says.

As Tacoma has grown, the city has had to grapple with increasingly complex urban problems, including gang activity. To combat a rising crime rate, the City of Tacoma, the Tacoma School District, Pierce County (where Tacoma is located), and the United Way developed a program called Safe Streets, which brought communities, schools, and police services in closer touch with one another. This grass-roots program was implemented neighborhood by neighborhood and has earned awards for innovation in community services from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School.

Tacoma now has a fully funded drug and alcohol prevention program at the fifth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade levels. The Tacoma Fire Department is active with fire prevention programs in the schools, there is an extensive AIDS education program, and public utilities personnel work with schools in carrying out environment-related projects. The business community contributes to the collaborative effort by being actively involved in a Youth Hall of Fame program.

"We feel that we're on our way to building a better community for our children," Mayor Vialle says. "We still have a long way to go, but one of the things we want Tacoma to be known for is as a city that invests in its children and values its kids."

Sharon Pratt Kelly, Washington, D.C.

One of Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly's highest priorities throughout her life has been the well-being of the young people in her community. Soon after she took office as mayor of the nation's capital, she organized and chaired a series of meetings to which everyone with a stake in the welfare of children was invited.

"We began a dialogue with every government agency dealing with the needs of children," she says. "We talked to everyone who was concerned about it—whether as providers of particular services, whether as civic groups, whether as fraternities and sororities, and the like. And the first thing was, none of them had ever been around one table together to have a discussion around how we were dealing with it.... Now the schools were at the table, the chief judge of the Family Division of the Superior Court was at the table, the police department, the corrections department, employment services, recreation, human services, anybody connected was at the table."

When the various agencies began sharing information, it became apparent that there was far too little coordination among services. In many cases, basic health services were not reaching those who needed them most, and the long-term effects were readily apparent. Mayor Kelly notes that "virtually no prenatal health care was going on, no healthy starts of any kind, no early childhood nutrition and the like; and not surprisingly, these youngsters, with poor nutrition, poor eating habits, ended up with behavioral problems that ended up becoming learning problems that ended up becoming juvenile justice problems."

Out of these cooperative efforts came a number of programs designed to fill these gaps in the city's youth services. A Youth Initiative now includes health-care and early-childhood-development programs that target specific neighborhoods where children are especially at risk. A program called Turning Points uses not-for-profit providers for delivering some essential support services, and mentoring programs have been expanded.

A Youth Initiative in Washington, D.C., now includes health care and early childhood development programs that target specific neighborhoods where children are especially at risk.

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A New Resource for Collaboration

The recent publication of *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* is indicative of the attention collaboration is receiving from educational policymakers and practitioners throughout the country. The book itself was published as a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It chronicles the ways that schools and school districts can form partnerships with community agencies to improve the quality of local education.

Many of the ideas contained in *Together We Can* came out of the experiences of twenty-six individuals who made up the School-Linked Integrated Services Study Group. The study group, chaired by Martin J. Blank, senior associate at the Institute for Educational Leadership, was made up of "practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and advocates engaged in efforts to develop profamily systems of integrated services at the local, state, and national levels" (p. 2). Their collective knowledge of the process of community collaboration formed the basis for the book's detailed description of a five-stage framework for building successful partnership programs. The five stages include (1) getting together, (2) building trust and ownership, (3) developing a strategic plan, (4) taking action, and (5) going to scale.

Together We Can concludes with profiles of four community efforts at collaboration, including the Walbridge Caring Communities program in St. Louis, Missouri; the Lafayette Courts Family Development Center in Baltimore, Maryland; the New Beginnings program in San Diego, California; and the Youth Futures Authority in Savannah-Chatham County, Georgia.

The book also includes checklists for tracking progress in program-building; a complete directory of local, regional, and national organizations that can serve as resources for groups wishing to establish collaborative partnerships; and an extensive bibliography of printed resources helpful to individuals and public and private agencies interested in learning more about collaborative strategies for improving the well-being of young people in our schools and communities.

Copies of *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* are available free of charge from the Office Educational Research and Improvement. Please call Susan Talley at (202) 219-2129 or Carol Mitchell at (202) 219-2128 to receive a copy.

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